In the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1   1.   (Currently Amended) An <u>online shopping system for various retailers, the</u>

2   <u>online shopping system</u> ~~electronic (e-) commerce system~~ comprising:

3   a shop server provided on which is a <u>virtual</u> shopping mall

4   including a plurality of virtual shops <u>operated by the various retailers</u>;

5   ~~a virtual-shop retailer system having at least a terminal provided~~

6   ~~for each of a plurality of retailers who own the virtual shops; and~~

7   an e-commerce support system shared by the <u>online shopping</u>

8   <u>system with the various</u> retailers ~~and connected to the virtual-shop retailer~~

9   ~~system~~ via the Internet, <u>said e-commerce support system including a</u>

10   <u>Web server, a database, and an application server; and</u> ~~wherein the e-~~

11   ~~commerce support system includes;~~

12   <u>virtual-shop retailer systems established for the various retailers,</u>

13   <u>said virtual-shop retailer systems each having at least a terminal, and</u>

14   <u>selectively including a Web server, a database, and an application server</u>

15   <u>provided by one of the various retailers, and said Web server of said e-</u>

16   <u>commerce support system, said database of said e-commerce support</u>

17   <u>system, and said application server of said e-commerce support system,</u>

18   <u>wherein said virtual-shop retailer systems each maintain one of said</u>

19   <u>plurality of virtual shops and uses functions selectively provided by said</u>

20   <u>application servers to accomplish e-commerce.</u>

21   ~~a Web server to which each retailer makes an access via a~~

22   ~~terminal of each retailer over the Internet, thus performing access~~

23   ~~management for each retailer;~~

24   ~~a database storing data for each of functions required for e-~~

25   ~~commerce; and~~

26   ~~an application server to establish each of the functions by using~~

27   ~~the stored data, necessary functions among the functions required for e-~~

28   commerce being offered to each retailer and available through the

29   terminal of each retailer over the Internet, the necessary functions

30   depending on each retailer having the virtual-shop retailer system having

31   at least the terminal.

1   2.   (Canceled).

1   3.   (Currently Amended) The online shopping system electronic commerce

2   system according to claim 6 1, wherein each of said functions function

3   selectively provided by said application servers is put into a module.

1   4.   (Currently Amended) The online shopping system electronic commerce

2   system according to claim 1 further comprising:

3   a table storing membership numbers assigned to customers by

4   each of the various retailers retailer and membership identification

5   numbers assigned to customers by said e-commerce support system the

6   electronic commerce supporting system irrespective of each retailer but

7   corresponding to the membership numbers;

8   a customer database storing personal data on the customers for

9   each of the membership identification numbers; and

10   a certificate server to authenticate a customer using the table and

11   the customer database in response to a membership number sent by one

12   of the various retailers a retailer via the terminal thereof, a result of

13   authentication being sent only to the terminal of the one of the various

14   retailers retailer which has made an access to the certificate server for

15   customer authentication.

1   5.   (New) The online shopping system according to claim 1, wherein the

2   databases selectively included in the virtual-shop retailer systems store

3   data required by said functions selectively provided by said application

4   servers to accomplish e-commerce.

1   6.   (New) The online shopping system according to claim 1, wherein said

2   functions selectively provided said application servers include a virtual

3   shop creation function, a charge/settlement function, and a delivery

4   management function.

1   7.   (New) A method for an online service provider to establish an online

2   shopping system for various retailers, comprising the steps of

3   providing a virtual shopping mall on a shop server capable of

4   supporting virtual shops;

5   contracting with the various retailers to operate the virtual shops;

6   providing access to an e-commerce support system, the e-

7   commerce support system including a Web server, a database, and an

8   application server;

9   sharing the Web server of the e-commerce support system over

10   the Internet, the database of the e-commerce support system, and the

11   application server of the e-commerce support system with the various

12   retailers;

13   establishing a system for a particular retailer of the various

14   retailers to maintain one of the virtual shops, wherein the system includes

15   a terminal having a WWW-browser, and selectively includes a Web

16   server, a database, and an application server provided by the particular

17   retailer, and the Web server of the e-commerce support system, the

18   database of the e-commerce support system, and the application server

19   of the e-commerce support system; and

20   operating the system to maintain the one of the virtual shops,

21   wherein the system uses functions selectively provided by the application

22   servers to accomplish e-commerce.

1   8.   (New) The method of claim 7, wherein a first system for a first retailer

2   does not have a Web server provided by the first retailer, the first system

3   established by connecting to the Web server of the e-commerce support

4   system, wherein a second system for a second retailer does not have a

5   database provided by the second retailer, the second system established

6   by connecting to the database of the e-commerce support system, and

7   wherein a third system for a third retailer does not have the application

8   server provided by the third retailer, the second established by

9   connecting to the application server of the e-commerce support system.

1   9.   (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the functions selectively provided

2   by the application servers include a virtual shop creation function, a back

3   office function, a charge/settlement function, and a delivery management

4   function.

1   10.   (New) The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of renting

2   modules containing the functions provided by the application server of the

3   e-commerce support system, the modules being accessible over the

4   Internet.

1   11.   (New) The method of claim 9, further comprising the steps of

2   creating the one of the virtual shops using the virtual shop creation

3   function, the virtual shop creation function providing pre-designed page

4   templates, wherein the pre-designed page templates are edited by the

5   particular retailer; and

6   registering commodities associated with the one of the virtual

7   shops using the pre-designed page templates.